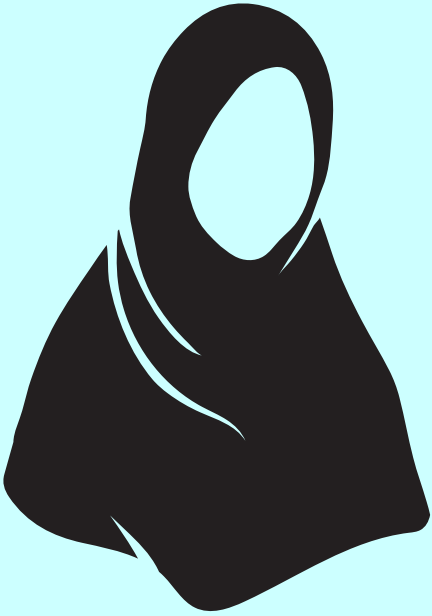
HIJAB

(THE DRESS OF MODESTY IN ISLAM)



Allamah Sayyid Saeed Akhtar Rizvi

المعارف
AL-MA'ĀRIF

HIJAB
(THE DRESS OF MODESTY IN ISLAM)

by:
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بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

الحمد لله رب العالمين والصلاة والسلام على
أشرف المرسلين وخاتم النبيين أحمد المجتبى أبى
القاسم محمد المصطفى وآله الطيبين الطاهرين

Preface

My friend, late Haji Yusuf Hussain Sheriff of Arusha (Tanzania) had asked me to deliver a lecture on the subject of *Hijab* (*Purdah*) at the 8th annual seminar of the Golden Crescent Group, which was to be held at Lushoto on the 22nd and 23rd October, 1977. At that time I was busy making arrangements for our *hajj* journey and wanted to be excused. But on his insistence I had to agree. The result is the Part One of this booklet, which contains the lecture and the questions and answers which followed. Just 3 months later, Haji Yusuf suddenly expired at Mombasa (Kenya). *We belong to Allah and to Him is our return.*

This part's Swahili translation (by Shaykh Dhikiri O. M. Kiondo, Editor, *Sauti ya Bilal*) was published by the Bilal Muslim Mission of Tanzania long ago. But the original remained pending because I wanted to make it more comprehensive. Once postponed, it remained forgotten until recently when the situation in the society in Africa and elsewhere demanded its publication.

Now I have added the Part Two, which contains further details. And as they say in Arabic, everything is pledged to its time, the booklet is now published — after 15 years.

I dedicate the *thawab* of writing this booklet to late Haji Yusuf H. Sheriff. May Allah give him a high place near the 14 Ma'sumin (as).

It is being published on the initiative of Haji Kurbanali Khaki, of Dar es Salaam, who has also borne the expenses of its printing. May Allah *Subhanahu wa Ta'ala* give him its reward and bestow on him prosperity and success in both worlds. Amen.

Sayyid Saeed Akhtar Rizvi
Chief Missionary

Dar es Salaam
10th Dhu 'l-hijja, 1412
12th June, 1992

PART ONE

The essence of Islam is "Submission to the Will of Allah", to make one's opinions, inclinations and actions subservient to the commands of Allah.

وَمَا كَانَ لِمُؤْمِنٍ وَلَا مُؤْمِنَةٍ إِذَا قَضَى اللهُ وَرَسُولُهُ أَمْرًا أَن يَكُونَ لَهُمُ الْخِيَرَةُ مِنْ أَمْرِهِمْ ۗ وَمَن يَعْصِ اللهَ وَرَسُولَهُ فَقَدْ ضَلَّ ضَلَالًا مُّبِينًا ﴿٣٦﴾

And it is not for a believer man or believer woman to have any choice in their affair when Allah and Hiss Messenger decided a matter; and whoever disobeys Allah and His Messenger, indeed he has strayed a manifest straying.[1]

Therefore, if one asks why *Hijab* or *Purdah* is necessary, the only proper reply would be, 'because Allah and His Messenger have so decided'. And that should be the end of all arguments, so far as the believing men and believing women are concerned.

But in this age, *Hijab* has been equated with backwardness of society and is regarded as a symbol of servitude of women. Many preachers think it is safer to avoid this subject in their lectures. But the Holy Prophet has said:

اذا ظهرت البدع فى امتى فليظهر العالم علمه و الا فعليه لعنة الله و الملئكة والناس أجمعين

When Bid'ats appear and an 'Alim does not say what he knows (against that Bid'at) then he is cursed by Allah, the angels and the men.[2]

Islam is a compact religion in which all rules and regulations

1 Holy Qur'an, 33:36.
2 *Safinatu 'l-Bihar*, vol. 1, p. 63.

are well synchronized, and if one wants to tamper with a certain part, the whole system would disintegrate. You have to accept the whole machinery as it is; you cannot choose from it.

Islam believes in keeping men and women apart. It has entrusted males and females with completely separate responsibilities, according to their natural ability. Man is obliged to earn livelihood for himself and his family. Woman has been entrusted with responsibility of managing domestic affairs, and upbringing the children in Islamic background.

The proponents of the "liberty" of women sneer at this division of labour, implying that proper upbringing of children is an inferior duty which degrades women. They do not realize that their new social order, which deprives the children of parental care and control is a major factor in increasing juvenile delinquency, which in its turn is tearing the society apart.[3]

Purdah or *Hijab* as we know it, was not in Arabia before Islam. It was introduced in Madina by specific injunctions of the Qur'an, long before non-Arabs came into the fold of Islam.

Ummu 'l-muminin 'Ayeshah is reported to praise the women of *al-Ansar* in these words:

> "I did not see any women better than those of *al-Ansar*, in their confirmation of Allah's Book and the faith in the revelation. As soon as the chapter of *an-Nur* was revealed, containing the words, *and they draw their head covers over their neck slits*, [and they were informed of it by their men] everyone of them without exception took her robe (shawl) and wound it around her head, in conformity with, and faith in, what Allah had revealed in His Book. They came next

3 For detailed description of this topic, please, see my book, *The Family Life of Islam*, Revised edition published by WOFIS, Tehran, Iran.

morning behind the Messenger (s.a.w.) with those wound robes on heads as if a crow was sitting on their heads."[4]

Therefore, the attempts of some self-appointed non-Muslim experts of Islam, to show that *Hijab* came to Islam when the Arabs conquered neighbouring countries, has no leg to stand. Modesty is one of the fundamentals of Islamic *Shari'ah*. Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (a.s.) said: الحياء من الايمان (*Modesty is a part of Iman*).[5]

Verses of Hijab

First let us read the verses of the Qur'an on this subject:-

There are three verses in *Sura An-Nur*:-

قُل لِّلْمُؤْمِنِينَ يَغُضُّوا مِنْ أَبْصَارِهِمْ وَيَحْفَظُوا فُرُوجَهُمْ ۚ ذَٰلِكَ أَزْكَىٰ لَهُمْ ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ خَبِيرٌ بِمَا يَصْنَعُونَ ﴿٣٠﴾ وَقُل لِّلْمُؤْمِنَاتِ يَغْضُضْنَ مِنْ أَبْصَارِهِنَّ وَيَحْفَظْنَ فُرُوجَهُنَّ وَلَا يُبْدِينَ زِينَتَهُنَّ إِلَّا مَا ظَهَرَ مِنْهَا ۖ وَلْيَضْرِبْنَ بِخُمُرِهِنَّ عَلَىٰ جُيُوبِهِنَّ ۖ وَلَا يُبْدِينَ زِينَتَهُنَّ إِلَّا لِبُعُولَتِهِنَّ أَوْ آبَائِهِنَّ أَوْ آبَاءِ بُعُولَتِهِنَّ أَوْ أَبْنَائِهِنَّ أَوْ أَبْنَاءِ بُعُولَتِهِنَّ أَوْ إِخْوَانِهِنَّ أَوْ بَنِي إِخْوَانِهِنَّ أَوْ بَنِي أَخَوَاتِهِنَّ أَوْ نِسَائِهِنَّ أَوْ مَا مَلَكَتْ أَيْمَانُهُنَّ أَوِ التَّابِعِينَ غَيْرِ أُولِي الْإِرْبَةِ مِنَ الرِّجَالِ أَوِ الطِّفْلِ الَّذِينَ لَمْ يَظْهَرُوا عَلَىٰ عَوْرَاتِ النِّسَاءِ ۖ وَلَا يَضْرِبْنَ بِأَرْجُلِهِنَّ لِيُعْلَمَ مَا يُخْفِينَ مِن زِينَتِهِنَّ ۚ وَتُوبُوا إِلَى اللَّهِ جَمِيعًا أَيُّهَ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ ﴿٣١﴾

Say unto the believer men that they cast down their gaze and guard their private parts; that is purer for them. Verily, Allah is well Aware of all that you do. And say unto the believing women that they cast down their gaze and guard their private parts,

4 *Ad-Durru 'l-Manthur*, vol. 5, p. 42; *al-Kashshaf*, vol. 3, p. 62.
5 *Safinatu 'l-Bihar*, vol. 1, p. 360.

and they display not their "Zinat" (adornment) except what becomes apparent of it; and they draw their "Khumur" (head covers) over their "Juyub" (neck-slits); and they display not their "Zinat" except to their husbands, or their fathers, or the father of their husbands, or their brothers, or their sons, or the sons of their husbands, or their brothers, or their brother's sons, or their sister's sons, or their women or those whom their right hands possess, or the male servants void of sexual desires, or the children who have not yet attained the knowledge of women's secrets (or nakedness), and they should not strike their feet so that what they hide of their "Zinat" becomes known; and turn you all unto Allah, O you believers, so that you may be successful.[6]

Explanation of Important Words

Zinat:

الزينة: ما يتزين به الإنسان من حلى ولبس وأشباه ذلك

What a human being uses to adorn himself/herself like ornaments, clothes and similar things.

Khumur:

بخمرهن أي مقانعهن، جمع خمارو هي المقنعة، وسميت بذلك لأن الرأس يخمر بها أي يغطى، وكل شيء غطيته فقد خمرته، وجمع الخمار الخمر ككتاب وكتب

With their *khumur* i.e. with their head covers; plural of *khimar*.

Juyub:

Plural of *jayb*, i.e. neck-slit. Before the revelation of

6 Holy Qur'an, 24:30-31.

this verse, Arab women did not cover their necks and neck lines were usually low (they anticipated the 20th century fashion). So, they were ordered to cover their necks with their head covers.

Mahram:

The relatives before whom a woman is allowed to display her *Zinat* are listed in this verse. They are called *Mahram*. *Mahram* means those relatives (by birth, fostership or marriage) with whom marriage is perpetually forbidden. Thus, father-in-law is *Mahram*; but sister of wife is not *mahram*, because one may marry her after death of the wife or after divorcing her.

The phrase, "their fathers" includes paternal and maternal uncles.

Illa ma Zahara Minha:

except what becomes apparent of it. It will be explained later.

The third verse in the same Sura exempts a very old woman from putting on veil:-

وَالْقَوَاعِدُ مِنَ النِّسَاءِ اللَّاتِي لَا يَرْجُونَ نِكَاحًا فَلَيْسَ عَلَيْهِنَّ جُنَاحٌ أَن يَضَعْنَ ثِيَابَهُنَّ غَيْرَ مُتَبَرِّجَاتٍ بِزِينَةٍ ۖ وَأَن يَسْتَعْفِفْنَ خَيْرٌ لَّهُنَّ ۗ وَاللَّهُ سَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ ﴿٦٠﴾

Such elderly women as are past the prospect of marriage, there is no blame on them if they lay aside their outer garments, provided they make not a display of their adornment; but it is good for them if they restrain themselves; and Allah is All-hearing All-knowing.[7]

7 Holy Qur'an, 24:60.

Explanation of Important Words

Al-Qawa'id:

Those women who have passed the age of menses and child-bearing and are not desirous of marriage because of their old age.

Yada'na:

It denotes laying aside an outer garment like shawl or chadar, and not removing a dress like shirt or frock from body.

This exception presupposes a general rule. That the elderly women may lay aside their veil, shows that other cannot lay it aside. And even elderly women have been encouraged not to lay aside their veil, because it is good for them (and perhaps to set a good example to the younger generation!).

Then there are 4 verses in *Surah Al-Ahzab*:-

يَا نِسَاءَ النَّبِيِّ لَسْتُنَّ كَأَحَدٍ مِّنَ النِّسَاءِ ۚ إِنِ اتَّقَيْتُنَّ فَلَا تَخْضَعْنَ بِالْقَوْلِ فَيَطْمَعَ الَّذِي فِي قَلْبِهِ مَرَضٌ وَقُلْنَ قَوْلًا مَّعْرُوفًا ﴿٣٢﴾ وَقَرْنَ فِي بُيُوتِكُنَّ وَلَا تَبَرَّجْنَ تَبَرُّجَ الْجَاهِلِيَّةِ الْأُولَىٰ

O Women of the Prophet! You are not like any other woman, if you fear (Allah); so be not soft in your speech, lest lusts after you he in whose heart is disease; and speak a good speech; And stay in your houses and display not yourselves like the display of the Ignorance of Yore...[8]

Explanation of Important Words

"Women of the Prophet":

This verse is addressed to the women of the Prophet

8 Holy Qur'an, 33:32-33.

but all Muslim women are included in it; as so many verses addressed to the Holy Prophet are meant for the whole *Ummah*. For Example, there is a verse:

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّبِيُّ إِذَا طَلَّقْتُمُ النِّسَاءَ فَطَلِّقُوهُنَّ لِعِدَّتِهِنَّ

O Prophet! When you divorce (your) women, divorce them at their prescribed period...[9]

It is an accepted principle that the rules of the Qur'an are for the whole *Ummah*, except where there is a clear indication that it is not meant for others.

"You are not like any other women":

Muslim women are not like non-Muslim women. So, they should maintain their distinction and dignity.

"Like the display of the Ignorance of Yore":

To "stay in your houses" is the dignity of Islam; and to display oneself is the trade-mark of the pre-Islamic Ignorance and *Kufr*.

There is a *hadith* in *Tafsir* of Al-Qummi (with his chain of narrators) from Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (a.s.) from his father (a.s.) that he said about the clause, *like the display of the Ignorance of Yore*: "It implies that there surely will come another era of Ignorance."

Allamah At-Tabatabai's comments: "It is a fine inference."[10]

A Question: Has that predicted era of the latter days, ignorance already arrived?

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9 Holy Qur'an, 65:1; See *al-Kashshaf*, vol. 4, p. 117.
10 *Al-Mizan*, vol. 16, p. 316.

وَإِذَا سَأَلْتُمُوهُنَّ مَتَاعًا فَاسْأَلُوهُنَّ مِن وَرَاءِ حِجَابٍ ۚ ذَٰلِكُمْ أَطْهَرُ لِقُلُوبِكُمْ وَقُلُوبِهِنَّ ۚ

And if you ask from them any goods, ask you of them from behind the curtain; purer it is for your heats and for their hearts.[11]

Explanation: This verse is about the wives of the Holy Prophet. It shows the ideal of *Purdah* or *Hijab* for a Muslim woman, that she should remain inside her house; and *Ghair-Mahram* men should talk to her, if necessary, from behind a curtain.

When the above verse was revealed, the companions asked the Prophet whether they should remain hidden from their daughters, mothers and sisters also. Then the following verse was revealed:-

لَّا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْهِنَّ فِي آبَائِهِنَّ وَلَا أَبْنَائِهِنَّ وَلَا إِخْوَانِهِنَّ وَلَا أَبْنَاءِ إِخْوَانِهِنَّ وَلَا أَبْنَاءِ أَخَوَاتِهِنَّ وَلَا نِسَائِهِنَّ وَلَا مَا مَلَكَتْ أَيْمَانُهُنَّ ۖ وَاتَّقِينَ اللَّهَ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ شَهِيدًا ﴿٥٥﴾

There is no blame on them (women) about their fathers, nor their sons, nor their brothers, nor their brothers' sons, nor their sisters' sons, nor their own women, nor whom their right hands possess, and fear you (O women) Allah: Verily Allah is Witness on everything.[12]

Thus, the question asked by the Companion was answered.

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّبِيُّ قُل لِّأَزْوَاجِكَ وَبَنَاتِكَ وَنِسَاءِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ يُدْنِينَ عَلَيْهِنَّ مِن جَلَابِيبِهِنَّ ۚ ذَٰلِكَ أَدْنَىٰ أَن يُعْرَفْنَ فَلَا يُؤْذَيْنَ ۗ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ غَفُورًا

11 Holy Qur'an, 33:53.
12 Holy Qur'an, 33:55.

رَّحِيمًا ﴿٥٩﴾

O Prophet! Say unto your wives, and your daughters and the women of the believers that they let down upon them their 'Jilbab' (robe which covers head, face and shoulders); so that they may be distinguished, so that they will not be troubled; Allah is Oft-Forgiving the most Merciful.[13]

Explanation of Important Words

Jalabib:

It is a plural of *Jilbab*.

وهو ثوب واسع أوسع من الخمار ودون الرداء تلويه المرأة على رأسها وتبقي منه ما ترسله على صدرها، وقيل: الجلباب الملحفة كلما يستتر به من كساء أو غيره. ومعنى يدنين عليهن من جلابيبهن أي يرخينها عليهن ويغطين به وجوههن وأعطافهن، أي أكتافهن (مجمع البحرين الشيخ الطريحي)

Jilbab is a robe bigger than headcover and shorter than shawl. The woman puts it on her head and it covers up to her breast. *Jilbab* means blanket and all things which cover the body like shawl etc. And the meaning of يدنين عليهن من جلابيبهن is that they should let down their robes upon them so that it covers their faces, and shoulders.

Jilbab should not be confused with *Khimar* (head cover) mentioned above, because

الجلباب وهو القناع من فوق الخمار

Jilbab is the outer robe worn over *Khimar*.[14]

13 Holy Qur'an, 33:59.

14 *Ad-Durru 'l-Manthur*, vol. 5, p. 42.

In fact it is what is variously called *chadar*, *burqa'*, *niqab* or *purdah*.

The above verses guide the women as follows:

1. They should stay in their houses.
2. They should not talk is soft words with *Ghair-Mahram* men.
3. There should be a curtain on the door.
4. They should not show their *Zinat* except to their *Mahram*.
5. If they have to come out of their house (for any valid reason) they should cover their bodies with veil.

Also it appears from the above verses that there are two stages of Hijab:

a. Hijab of Eyes.
b. Hijab of Dress.

Hijab of Eyes

The believer men must cast down their gaze and believer women must cast down their gaze. None is allowed to look at the opposite sex, unless he or she is within the prohibited degree (*mahram*).

As the man is required to struggle for earning the livelihood, he is not told to hide his body (except to a certain extent). Still he is obliged to cast down his gaze; and not to look at *Ghair-Mahram* women.

Woman can easily keep herself covered and hidden because her sphere of activity is her home; therefore, she was told to cover her entire body, as well as cast down her gaze and not to look at *Ghair-Mahram* men.

There are many *ahadith* which say that:

النظرسهم من سهام ابليس مسموم

Glance is a poisoned arrow from the arrows of Shaitan.[15]

ايّاكم و النظرة فانهاتزرع فى قلب صاحبها الشهوة وكفى بها لصاحبها فتنة

Beware of glancing, because it sows lust in the heart of the glances, and enough is it for a mischief.[16]

Another *hadith* says that the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) said:

ومن ملأ عينه من امرءة حراما حشره الله يوم القيامة مسمّراً بمسامير من نار حتى يقضى لله تعا لى بين الناس ثم يؤ مربه الى النار (الحديث)

Whoever fills his eyes looking at women unlawfully, Allah will raise him on the day of resurrection with nails of fire driven in (his eyes), until judgement is given concerning the whole mankind; then he will be ordered to be driven into the Fire.[17]

Numerous *ahadith* declare that the glance after the 1st glance is an arrow of Shaitan; and is Haram. Our boys and girls should ponder on these verses and traditions, in order to realize that wearing *hijab* or scarf is not a license to look freely at the opposite sex.

Hijab of Dress

We may discuss this subject under the following headings:-

Extent of Covering

The dress must cover the woman's whole body, except what

15 *Safinatu 'l-Bihar*, vol. 2, p. 596; *Ad-Durru 'l-Manthur*, vol. 5, p. 42.
16 *Safinatu 'l-Bihar*, vol. 2, p. 596.
17 *Ibid*, p. 171.

has been specifically exempted. According to authentic *Ahadith* of both Shi'a and Sunni books, "the whole body of woman is *'awrah*."

المرأة عورة (*The woman is 'awrah*).[18] And what is the meaning of *'awrah*?

> قيل للسوأة عورة لقبح النظر اليها وكل شيء يستره الانسان انفة و حياء فهو عورة والنساء عورة
>
> The genitals are called *'awrah*, because it is a shame to look at them; and everything which a man hides (because of pride or shame) is called *'awrah*; and the women are *'awrah*.

According to *Al-Urwatu 'l-wuthqa* (by Sayyid Kazim Yazdi on which are footnotes of all great Mujtahids of recent times) covering is of two kinds:

1. First: The covering which is *Wajib* in itself at all times and it means:
   a. Hiding of *'awratain* (private parts, front and behind) from all people, male and female, *Mahram* and *Ghair-Mahram*, *Baligh* and *Ghair-Baligh*. (Exception: Husband and wife may look at each other. Also a very small child is exempted from this restriction.)

   b. As it is *haram* to uncover those parts before any person, so it is *haram* to look at them.

   c. It is *wajib* for a woman to cover her whole body (except face and hands up to wrists, which will be explained later) from all persons except her husband and Mahram.

18 *Kanzu 'l-'ummal*, vol. 16, ch. 6, p. 411, *hadith* no. 45158.

d. Face and Hands:
   i. If there is possibility that someone will look at her with lust, then it is *Wajib* to cover the hands as well.

   ii. If there is no such possibility, then it is *Ahwat* to cover them, according to *Fatwa* of Sayyid Kazim Yazdi, Sayyid Muhsin Hakim Tabataba'i, Sayyid Mahmud Husaini Shahrudi, Sayyid Abul-Qasim Khui, Sayyid Muhammad Kazim Shari'atmadari, Sayyid Muhammad Rida Gulpayegani and Sayyid Hadi Milani.

   iii. It is *haram* to look with lust at the body, face or hands of a man or woman, be he or she a *Mahram* or *Ghair-Mahram*. (Exception: Wife and Husband).

2. The second kind of covering concern the *Salat*:

   a. Man must cover his *awratain* even if there is no one there to look at him. And it *Ahwat* to cover between navel and knees.

   b. Woman must cover her whole body including hair and ears except face (from forehead upto the chin in length, and between the thumb and middle finger in width), hand (from wrist downwards) and feet upto ankles. It is Wajib to cover a portion of these excepted parts *Min Babil Muqaddamah*.

   c. It is not necessary for her to cover in prayer her ornaments or make up on face.

   d. If there is someone who is looking or may look with lust at her face, hands or feet during Salat, then it is *Wajib* for her to cover these parts also, not because of Salat, but

because of the general rule mentioned earlier.[19]

Face and Hands

In the first verse it is said that the women display not their *Zinat* (adornment) except what becomes apparent of it.

There is a difference of opinion about the meaning of this exception.

There is a group (both in the Sunni and the Shi'a sects) which says that *Ma Zahar Minha* means the face and hands, which according to them a woman is allowed to keep open.

Another group says that it refers to only that incidence when any part of her body or adornment becomes uncovered because of uncontrollable factors such as blowing of wind, or out of necessity such as the outer clothes themselves.

Leaving aside the Sunni traditions, there are four *ahadith* in Shi'a books which directly or indirectly support the first interpretation.

First *hadith* is from Mardak bin 'Ubayd from 'a man' from Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (a.s.) that this exception covers face, hands and feet (below ankles).

Second is from Qasim bin 'Urwah from Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (a.s.) that it means antimony and ring (implying eyes and hands).

Third is from Sa'dan bin Muslim from Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (a.s.) that the exception is of ring and bracelet (implying hands only).

19 *Al-'Urwatu 'l-wuthqa.*

Now ‘a man’ in the first hadith, Qasim bin ‘Urwah in the second and Sa‘dan bin Muslim in the third are “unknown” persons. Nobody knows how much reliance can be put on their words.

The fourth hadith is from ‘Amr bin Shimr from Jabir al-Ansari, that Jabir said that he went with the Prophet to the house of Fatimah (a.s.) and saw that she had become pale.

This ‘Amr bin Shimr was an ardent liar and Sunni and Shi‘a ‘Ulama unanimously say that he used to forge *ahadith* and attribute them to Jabir Ju‘fi and others.

Moreover, this *hadith* goes against the authentic *ahadith* which prove that Fatimah (a.s.) covered herself before allowing a blind companion of the Prophet to enter her house, and that she did not want her dead body to be put on an open plank (as was the custom at that time) because people would know her height.

Anyhow, it is only an academic difference, coming to practical side, all ‘Ulama (without any exception) say that if there is a danger that people will look at her face with lusty intention, then it is wajib for her to cover her face. And if there is no danger then according to one group it is *wajib* to cover the face, and according to the other it is *Ahwat*.

Now, it is for a woman to decide between Allah and herself whether such a danger exists in this enlightened society or not.

Thickness

The dress must be thick enough so as not to show the colour of skin or the shape of the body.

It is necessary to remind our women folk that the purpose

of *hijab* is not putting on any cloth but to hide the body. Transparent or thin clothes which reveal the colour of skin or shape of body are absolutely forbidden.

The Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) said, *inter alia*, in a *hadith*:

نساءهم كاسيات عاريات على رؤسهن كا سنمة النجت العجاف

العنو هنّ فا نهنّ ملعو نات

....Their women will be dressed, yet naked; on their heads will be like the humps of lean camels; do curse them, for they are truly cursed.[20]

The Holy Prophet on seeing a bride in a thin dress said:

"A woman who dressed like this, is not the one who believes in the *Surah an-Nur*."

Looseness

The dress must not be tight to describe the curves and shape of a woman's body.

Overall Appearance

a. The purpose of the dress is to conceal *Zinat*. It naturally follows that this cover itself should not be of a kind to attract onlookers to the woman inside. *Zinat* cannot be hidden by a dress which makes people turn their eyes towards the wearer. It is this type of dress which is forbidden in this ayat of the Qur'an: "*Bedizen not yourselves with the bedizenment of the Ignorance of Yore*."

b. Woman should not wear a dress which is generally known to be a male costume, nor vice versa. The Holy Prophet has

20 *Kanzu 'l-'ummal*, vol. 16, ch. 6, p. 401, hadith no. 45106; see also hadith no. 45013 on p. 383.

cursed the men who act like women and the women who act like men.[21]

c. It should not be a dress of fame, pride and vanity. Wearing excessively dirty or rugged cloth to demonstrate denial of 'Self' or one's rejection of the norms of society is not allowed. The showiness and pride are improper in the eyes of Islam and are rejected by Islamic ethics. The Prophet said: "Whoever wears a dress of fame in this world, Allah will cloth him with a dress of humiliation on the Day of Resurrection, then set it on fire."

Importance of Hijab

To see how much importance is give to *Hijab* in *Shariat*, it is enough to see how other rules and regulations are modified and changed to preserve the principle of *Hijab*:

1. Praying in the mosque is better than in house, and its reward goes on increasing as the gathering increases. But for the woman, the opposite is correct. There is more reward in house than in the verandah of the house.

2. *Jamaat* prayer: One of the basic conditions of *Jamaat* prayer is that there should be no barrier between Imam and *Ma'mum*, and between one *Ma'mum* and the other. But his order is not for the women. If they want to pray with *Jamaat*, they should pray behind a barrier.

3. *Adhan* and *Iqamah* before the daily five prayers are very much emphasized. But women are exempted from it. If they opt to say *Adhan* and *Iqamah*, they can do so, when there is no *Ghair-Mahram* to hear their voice. Otherwise, it is not allowed. (Though they may say it in whisper).

21 *Ibid*, p. 385, hadith no. 45020.

4. It is *wajib* for men to recite first two *rak'ahs* in Fajr, Maghrib and 'Isha prayers loudly. Women are required to pray in whisper only.

5. Friday prayer is *Wajib 'Aini* in the presence of the Imam (a.s.) or his appointed deputy and *wajib takhyiri* according to many 'Ulama during the *Ghaibat*. But women are exempted for this *wajib*.

6. *Ghusl-e-Mayyit*: it is necessary that the person giving funeral bath be a Muslim; but if a Muslim woman dies and there are male *ghayr-mahram* Muslims and female Christians, then the Christians woman should be asked to take a bath and then give *Ghusl* to the Muslim woman.

Another *'Alim*, Muhaqiq Hilli, does not agree with it. He says the *Ghusl-e-Mayyit* is an *Ibadah*, and it needs intention of *Qurbatan ilallah* which from a *Kafir* in not correct; so instead of allowing Muslim men should give her *Ghusl*, he says that the dead body should be buried without *Ghusl*.

7. There is great reward in carrying the bier of a Muslim and walking in his funeral procession. Women are exempted from it.

8. In *Ihram*, the woman is not allowed to cover her face, but, as Muhaqiq Thanik Karaki has written, this rule does not mean that seeing or being seen by *Ghayr-mahram* is allowed. Ayatullah Abul Qasim Khu'i writes that when the woman wants to hide herself from *Ghair-Mahram* in *Ihram*, she may pull down a corner of her *Ihram* on her face and chin; but it is *ahwat* that she put her hand or some other thing to keep the cloth away from her face.

9. *Jihad* (fighting in the way of Allah) is the most liked *Ibadah* (act of worship) but women are exempted from fighting.

So, we find that whenever any general rule comes in conflict with the rule of *Hijab*, it is not the *Hijab* which gives way. It is always the conflicting rule which is sacrificed for the principle of *Hijab*.

Hijab for Men

It is good to draw the attention of the audience to the requirements of dress of man also. These basic requirements have been mentioned above, and they may be enumerated as follows:-

1. Man must cover his *'Awratain* at all times, from all persons except his wife or a very small child.

2. He must cover his *'Awratain* in the prayer.

3. His cloth should not be tight so as to describe what it is supposed to hide.

4. It should not be thin so as to show the colour of the skin of the parts which should be covered.

5. The dress should not be like a costume generally considered a female costume.

6. They should not be clothes of fame, pride of vanity.

7. They should not be made of pure silk.

8. Man is not allowed to wear even impure gold.

Questions & Answers

Q.1: Is it allowed for a veiled girl to attend co-education Schools?

Answer: If she observes all the rules of hijab and is sure that no one would look at her with lust, then it is allowed.

Q. 2: If yes, then she would not be able to answer the questions put forward to her by the teacher, she would have to whisper?

Answer: Talking to *Ghair-Mahram* becomes *haram* (forbidden) when there is a danger that the said *Ghair-Mahram* may get lustful ideas by hearing the voices of the women.

Q. 3: Can a woman participate fully in social and economic life remaining in *purdah*?

Answer: Yes, provided she does not exceed the limits laid down by the *Shari'ah* of Islam. Remember that Islam does not allow free mingling of males and females.

Q. 4: In many societies both men and women have no work. For example, in an agricultural society, as in Tanzania, both men and women have to work in fields without which the family would starve. What would you suggest under this condition?

Answer: If you want to follow Islam you must change. In fact the notion that in an agricultural society a woman must work in the fields is based on short-sightedness. We see women working in Tanzania and then generalize it as a principle of sociology. We forgot that the countries which are feeding the world, like U.S.A., Canada, Australia etc. are agricultural countries, but their agriculture does not depend on their women working in the fields. So, it is not agriculture, per

se, which demands women's back breaking labour; it is backwardness which compels Tanzania women to work in the fields, and not its agricultural society. And we may say that Islam does not like this backwardness; it wants these ladies to return to their proper place that is home. In other words Tanzanian society will have to change by following Islamic principles if it wants to march forward.

Q. 5: Alims have been told to oppose *Bid'at*. At what stage should they do it? At early stage or later stages?

Answer: At every stage.

Q. 6: Muslim Women in different countries put on different types of veil. Which type of veil is in keeping with the principle of Islam?

Answer: Any type that would suit them provided the main purpose of *hijab*, i.e., hiding of their bodies, is served.

Q. 7: Is it not necessary for our women to go and obtain knowledge in medicine or pharmacy etc? A woman patient would prefer to be examined by a female doctor rather than a male one. She should also express herself more freely to a female doctor. There are only two women's colleges in the world in medicine; and due to the shortage of women doctors, it is necessary for our women to go and join other colleges and therefore they have to come out of *Purdah*.

Answer: She should try to go to a women's college only.

Q. 8: Some ladies, without veil, have kept their dignity. So why all this?

Answer: *Purdah* of eyes and *Purdah* of dress, both are

compulsory for all Muslim women. The dignity of a Muslim woman in the eyes of Allah depends on *Purdah*; for example, see the Ayat which says, *You are not like any other women*. It is the distinction and dignity of Muslim woman to "stay in your houses". If we try to separate their dignity form *Purdah*, then our outlook is not in conformity with God's preference.

By observing only the *Purdah* of Eyes, the ladies mentioned in the question are obeying only part of the divine law.

Q. 9: I believe in Islam that man and women will be treated equally tomorrow on the Day of Judgement. Now if that is the case, in view of the present inflation, why cannot a woman work and help the man in running a home?

Answer: Do not be extravagant and try to remain within the limits of the income earned by the husband. However a woman can help increasing the income by such means which do not require her to discard *hijab*. Equal treatment on the Day of Judgement does not mean equal burden in this life.

Q. 10: Should parents abstain from recommending *Purdah* to their daughters lest she is forced after marriage by her in-laws to take it down?

Answer: As far as she is with you, you are to perform your duties and responsibilities. What happens at a later stage when she is with her husband is not your responsibility. If you are afraid that after one week you will not get any food, would you start starving from today?

Q. 11: Is it respectable for a girl to have her veil removed by her in-laws?

Answer: No. It is *haram*. She has to refuse.

Q. 12: *Purdah* is wajib for a girl, but if the husband forbids her to do *wajib* things, what can she do then? Is it *wajib* to listen to her husband?

Answer: No. She is not to listen to him if he tells her to commit a sin. And the husband gets twice the sin for forcing her to remove *Purdah* or do any *haram* thing.

Q. 13: Accepting that woman's place is at home, should a wife in western countries be allowed to work in order to help her husband whose income alone is not adequate?

Answer: I think one thing must be clarified here before answering this question. التعرب بعد الهجرة is one of the seven great sins. If someone is living in a place where he is free to practice his religion, and he willingly migrates to a place where he will not be free to observe religious commands, it is called التعرب بعد الهجرة (literal meaning: To become a nomad after hijrat).

Many of our brethren had to go to western countries because of the circumstances beyond their control. They should not be blamed. But there are others who have opted for such countries just for worldly gains. They bear the great responsibility, not only of their own Akherat, but of their children and future generation also.

Now, coming to the question, the first advice to such people is not to go to such countries where they cannot meet their expenses without wife's earning. If they are there, and it is unavoidable, then the answer to question No. 9 is applicable here.

PART TWO

The part one was written in October 1977. Fifteen months later, came the Islamic revolution of Iran, and Islamic rule was established there on 11/2/1979. It was a world-shaking phenomenon which changed the direction of history throughout the world. Not only did it create religious awakening in every Muslim community, but also gave courage to down-trodden and oppressed masses everywhere and up against the exploiters and oppressors.

One the visible effect of the Islamic Revolution was to turn the direction of the youths from western culture to Islamic norms. Young Muslims boys now feel proud to keep beard and young girls have rediscovered the dignity of Islamic Hijab. And it is happening not only in the eastern countries but even in the West.

So far so good, we, of the older generation, are really happy to see this pleasant change.

At the same time, it is necessary, rather essential, to guide the youths to the proper Islamic path, charting for them the full course of their spiritual journey. It will enable them to see how much they have progressed and how far they have to go yet.

Before going ahead, I should mention an important principle of Islamic ideology, and that is the inter-relation of Islamic Laws and Islamic Ethics. Islamic Laws teach the minimum a person is required to do, and transgression of which entails sins and is sometimes considered a crime. Islamic Ethics take a man from that starting point to the highest peak of spiritual perfection.

If a man is sick and weak, he first needs treatment to cure his disease; after that he needs special regimen of diet, exercise and

tonics to restore his body, to bring him to the peak of his health and strength. The same principle applies in the spiritual field. Islamic laws keep man free from ills of sin and crime, while Islamic Ethics show him the way to noble spiritual perfection and strength.

From Islam's point of view, it is not enough to merely ordain some basic laws to protect the believers from sins, and leave them at that. A weak patient, even when cured of a disease, is an easy target of further attacks unless his strength is restored. Nor has Islam merely exhorted its followers to strive to reach high moral standards, without prescribing some rules to prevent them from negative influences.

Of what use will be tonics if body is riddled with debilitating diseases. Thus Islamic Laws and Islamic Ethics are inter-linked; they are different stages of the same spiritual journey. Islam knows that spiritual level of all people is not the same. Therefore, it has chosen for us the highest ethical and spiritual ideas, at the same time it has laid down minimum requirements which one cannot transgress without exposing himself to spiritual peril.

Let us, look, for example, at the concept of charity. A Muslim is responsible for providing sustenance to his immediate family (parents, self, wife and children). It is only after meeting those obligatory expenses, that he is exhorted to spend on charity.

Allah says in the Qur'an:

وَيَسْئَلُونَكَ مَاذَا يُنفِقُونَ قُلِ الْعَفْوَ

And they ask you as to what they should spend. Say: What you can spare.[22]

22 Holy Qur'an, 2:219.

This is the starting point of charity. But suppose you have some food just sufficient to satisfy the hunger of your own family, and your brother's or neighbour's family has nothing to eat. Islamic Ethics exhorts you to share that little food with them. Of course, your family will remain half-hungry; but is it not better that ten people should share in that little food, rather than five eating their fill while the other five remain starving? Allah says:

وَيُؤْثِرُونَ عَلَىٰ أَنفُسِهِمْ وَلَوْ كَانَ بِهِمْ خَصَاصَةٌ

> *...and they prefer (other) over themselves though poverty may afflict them.*[23]

This stage of charity is high commendable and is a hallmark of Islam. Yet, it is not the ultimate destination, the final goal. If we want to see the ideal charity, we will have to study the lives of the Holy Prophet and his family members (peace and mercy of Allah be on them all). Look at the verses of the Chapter 76, *ad-Dahr*, and you will see ʻAli, Fatimah, al-Hasan, al-Husayn and the maid Fiddah, fasting three days consecutively without taking any food and every night giving their breads to a poor man, an orphan and a captive. Three nights they fed hungry persons and stayed for more than 72 hours without a single morsel. Allah praises them in these words:

يُوفُونَ بِالنَّذْرِ وَيَخَافُونَ يَوْمًا كَانَ شَرُّهُ مُسْتَطِيرًا ﴿٧﴾ وَيُطْعِمُونَ الطَّعَامَ عَلَىٰ حُبِّهِ مِسْكِينًا وَيَتِيمًا وَأَسِيرًا ﴿٨﴾ إِنَّمَا نُطْعِمُكُمْ لِوَجْهِ اللَّهِ لَا نُرِيدُ مِنكُمْ جَزَاءً وَلَا شُكُورًا ﴿٩﴾

> *They fulfill vows and fear a day the evil of which shall be spreading far and wide. And they give food out of love for Him to the poor and the orphan and the captive. We only feed you for Allah's sake; we desire from you neither reward nor thanks.*[24]

23 Holy Qur'an, 59:9.
24 Holy Qur'an, 76:7-8.

Many orientalists, who are generally oblivious or ignorant of this inter-relation of the Islamic Laws and the Islamic Ethics, take it upon themselves to pronounce judgement on Islam, unfavourably comparing its Laws (i.e. the minimum requirements) with "the highest ethical stand points" of Christianity, and then pontificating that Islamic "moral teachings" have "shortcomings".

And unfortunately the same disoriented outlook is inculcated in most of those students who study Islam directly or indirectly under these non-Muslim orientalists. They look at Islam not as a single living entity, but as a lifeless collection of disjointed limbs. Not surprisingly, when such people look at *Fiqh* (jurisprudence), they do not see it as an essential part of the whole Islam, but consider it the Alpha and Omega of Islam, the total Islam.

Be as it may. Now let us come back to our original topic, Hijab or Purdah. Like all the Islamic tenets, its starting point is given in the *fiqh* (jurisprudence), which has been described in Part One. To refresh the memory, I give here some relevant rulings of three of our great mujtahideen.

Ayatullah al-'Uzma as-Sayyid Abu 'l-Qasim al-Khu'i writes:

> Mas'alah 1233: It is *wajib* for a woman to hide her whole body (except face and the two palms) from all men (except her husband and mahrams); rather it is *wajib* for her to hide her face and the palms too even from *mahrams* (except the husband) if the *mahram* may look at her with sensual pleasure; rather it is *wajib* for her to hide her even face and palms from *ghair-mahram* at all times and in all conditions — as a matter of *ihtiyat wajib*. And it is not *wajib* at all on a man to keep himself in *purdah*.
>
> Mas'alah 1232: It is *haram* for a woman to look at a man

(except at his face, head, neck and the feet); apparently she may look at these parts provided it is not done with sensual pleasure nor is there any danger of falling into *haram*, although it is *ahwat* not to look at these too even without sensual pleasure.[25]

These rulings tell us three things:

1. About the whole body (except face and palms): It is definitely *wajib* to cover.
2. About face and palms (when there is a possibility of someone looking at her with sensuous desires): It is definitely wajib to cover them.
3. About face and palms (when there is no such danger): It is *Ihtiyat wajib* to cover.

Thus according to Ayatullah al-'Uzma al-Khu'i, it is *ihtiyat wajib* for a woman to cover her face and hands from *ghair-mahram* men in all conditions. Now a muqallid has the option of either following this *ihtiyat* or referring to the next *a'lan mujtahid* and then to the next, if he has given *fatwa* on that matter. Ayatullah al-'Uzma al-Khomayni is said to allow the woman not to cover their faces and hands if there was no danger of any man looking at her with lustful intention or of falling into *haram*. Thus many of our girls acted on that *fatwa*.

However, the same al-Khomayni says that men are totally forbidden to look at a *ghair-mahram* woman's face and hands. He writes:

> Mas'alah 18: There is no doubt that a man is not allowed to look at the hair and body of a *ghair-mahram* woman (except her face and palms), be it with or without sensual pleasure or danger of falling into *haram*. Likewise it is *haram* to look at her face and palms too if it is with

25 *Minhaju 's-Salihin*, vol. 2, p. 260.

sensual pleasure or the said danger. As for looking at her face and palms without sensual pleasure or danger of falling into *haram*, there are two, rather three, opinions:

1. That is allowed unconditionally.
2. That is haram unconditionally.
3. That the first glance is allowed but the second one is *haram*.

And the middle opinion (i.e. it is *haram* unconditionally) is *ahwat* (*wajib*).[26]

Unfortunately, those who reported the *fatwa* about the women's responsibility did not think it necessary to even mention that it is obligatory for men not to look at her face and hands at all. A serious question may be asked loudly: Even if an organizer of a mixed gathering is sure of himself, how can he be sure of the others?

As for Ayatullah al-'Uzma Sayed Muhammad Rida Gulpaegani, his *fatwa* is as follows:

Mas'alah 2442: It is *haram* for a man to look at the body or hair of a *ghair-mahram* woman, whether it is with intention of sensuous enjoyment or not; likewise it is *haram* to look at the body or hair of a girl below nine years of age if such a glance may usually incite lusty feelings. And it is *haram* to look at their faces and hands with intentions of sensuous enjoyment rather the prohibition of looking at their face and hands, even without intention of sensuous enjoyment, is not without strong proof.

Likewise, it is haram for a woman to look at the body of a *ghair-mahram* man.[27]

26 *Tahriru 'l-Wasilah*, vol. 2, p. 243.

27 *Tawzihu 'l-Masa'il*, 61st ed., Muharram 1410, Qum, pp. 412-413.

This is the minimum hijab and it is the starting point. Now that our girls in East Africa and Western countries have started wearing scarf and covering their bodies, they have taken the first step on the path of Islamic Hijab. But they should realize that it is only the first step. They should follow and implement the second part of the ruling by covering their faces and hands every time there is a danger of someone looking at them with sensuous intention.

Remember, it is the definite ruling, not a matter of *Ihtiyat*. They should try their utmost to proceed on this path keeping the ultimate goal in their view. It is very regrettable that many preachers and speakers never present the ideology of hijab in its true perspective; and do not explain even this minimum requirement fully and completely. As a result the ladies do not realize that they at present are at the starting line of this spiritual journey and that they should strive to proceed further ahead.

IDEAL HIJAB

The ultimate or ideal hijab may be understood from the following traditions:

Once when the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) was in his house and the mothers of the believers, Ummu Salimah and Maymunah, were with him, a blind Companion, ʻAbdullah Ibn Maktum, sought permission to come to the Prophet (s.a.w.a.). The Prophet (s.a.w.a.) told the above-mentioned Mothers of the believers to hide themselves. They said: "But he is blind" The Prophet (s.a.w.a.) said: "Are you too blind? Would not you see him?"[28]

ʻAli (a.s.) said: Once a blind man (in company of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a) asked permission of Fatimah (a.s.) to enter her house. She stopped him (until she covered herself). The Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.a.) said: "Why did you stop him? He cannot see you." She said: "Although he cannot see me, but I can see him; and moreover, (if I do not hide) he might feel my scent." The Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) said: "I bear witness that you are a part of me."[29]

Once the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) asked her: "What is the best for a woman?" She replied: "That she does not see a man and no man sees her." The Prophet (s.a.w.a.) said: "Offspring, one from the other."[30]

ʻAli (a.s.) said: Once the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.a.) asked his companions about woman what she was. They said: "She is *ʻawrah* (a thing to hide)." He said: "At what time does she come nearest to her Lord?" They did not know. When Fatimah

28 *Ad-Durru 'l-Manthur*, vol. 5, p. 42.
29 *Biharu 'l-anwar*, vol. 43, p. 91.
30 *Ibid*, p. 84.

(a.s.) heard (the question), she said: "She becomes nearest to her Lord when she adheres to the innermost part of her house." The Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.a.) said: "I bear witness that you are a part of me."[31]

Also we know that she had asked ʻAli (a.s.) to put her dead-body in a covered coffin, as she did not like the idea of strangers looking at her dead body and knowing her height.

After the tragedy of Karbala, the family members of Imam Husayn (a.s.) were taken captive, and paraded in the markets of Kufa and Damascus without veil. When the Lady Zaynab (a.s.), sister of Imam Husayn (a.s.), was made to stand — together with other ladies and children — before Yazid in a court attended by 700 "dignitaries" and hundreds of onlookers, Zaynab (a.s.) at one point got her chance to deliver her famous *Khutbah* (speech) stingingly attacking Yazid exposing his barbarism, perfidity and debauchery. One of the indictments was contained in these words:

> امن العدل يابن الطلقاء تخديرك حرائرك وامائك، وسوقك بنات رسول الله صلى الله عليه واله سبايا قد هتكت ستورهن وابديت و جوههن يتصفح و جوههن القريب والبعيد والدنى والشريف
>
> *Is it justice, O son of the freed slaves! That you have kept your woman and slave girls in seclusion, and have paraded the daughters of the Messengers of Allah (Mercy of Allah be on him and his Progeny), their veil torn away and their faces visible to all; their faces are peered at by all, be he far or near, lowly or noble.*[32]

Some people have taken it upon themselves to preach to the ladies that if they cover their bodies, keeping the faces and

31 *Ibid*, p. 85.
32 *al-Ihtijaj*, vol. 2, p. 308.

hands open, then they are free to mingle with gents in religious gatherings and elsewhere. But as a matter of fact, Islam does not approve mingling of *ghair-mahram* men and women at all. After all, hijab of dress does not exempt one from hijab of eyes.

Also it has been described above that it is unanimously wajib for a woman to cover her face if there is any possibility that someone would look at her with lusty enjoyment, or if there is any danger of falling in haram. Even if an office-bearer of a Jamaat, union or association is sure of himself that he would not look at any lady with lusty intentions or sensuous enjoyment, how can he be sure about other men in the gathering, especially the young folk?

There is an interesting point to ponder upon. We know that a man is obliged to cover from his navel to the knees only. Then why don't we exhort the gents to come to the community gathering (if not in the markets and streets) wearing half pants only? Why is that they are not preached against wearing shirts, full trousers, coats, ties and socks?

If the men are not told to stick to the minimum covering, why the women are exhorted to stick to the minimum or even less than minimum? Why are not they explained the complete *fatwa* in its true perspective? Religiously speaking, is such preaching progressive or retrogressive?

The Muslim ladies and gents must observe the hijab of the eyes as well as hijab of the dress. It would be travesty of hijab for a girl to mix freely with *ghair-mahram* boys, while wearing a scarf or head cover.

May Allah *Subhanahu wa Ta'ala* give all of us *tawfiq* to observe and obey His commandments with sincerity and devotion.

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